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SONGS

...of...

Grief and Gladness

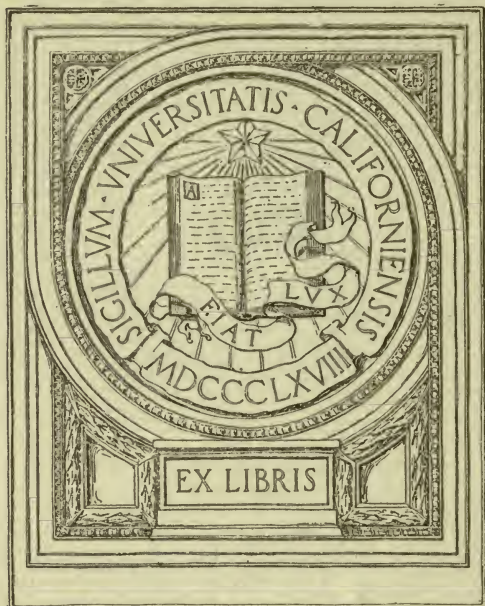
and

"Deborah"

by

EZEKIEL LEAVITT

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EZEKIEL LEAVITT.

SONGS OF
GRIEF AND GLADNESS
and
"DEBORAH"

BY
EZEKIEL LEAVITT.



WITH AN APPRECIATION OF LEAVITT

BY

GOTTHARD DEUTSCH, Ph. D.,

Professor of Jewish History and Literature in Hebrew Union College.

AND

A Foreword by the Translator,

MISS ALICE STONE BLACKWELL.

ABSOLUT

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PRESS OF THE MODERN VIEW
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AN APPRECIATION OF LEAVITT.

BY PROF. GOTTHARD DEUTSCH.

More than a hundred years ago, Issachar Falkensohn Behr, a Russian Jew, who studied medicine in Germany, published a volume of poems under the title of "Poems of a Polish Jew." No less a man than the great Goethe himself honored this work with a review, in which he says that the man who calls himself on the title page of his work a Polish Jew is guilty of a pretense. He claims by this phrase, that his poetry is something original, and when, like Behr, he merely gives weak imitations of the customary run of odes to the spring, and when he sings, like every other mediocre genius, of the rosebuds and the nightingale, he has no right to give his poetry a specific name.

The condemnation was quite justified one hundred years ago and remained so for a long time. When Jews, who were imbued with some slight secular knowledge, tried their hand at literature, it took a long time before they emancipated themselves. It may have been about fifty years ago that Abraham Mapu began to write some novels in the Hebrew language. He tried to give expression to the longings and the ideals of the Jewish soul. At first he transferred his poetry to Biblical times, and naturally was affected. Later on he began to place his stories in a more modern environment. He spoke of the battle of the new ideals, which stood for refinement of life, breadth of culture and secular education, against religious obscurantism, against the uncouthness of the Ghetto and the evils resulting from bigotry. Independently there arose a Jewish literature in the German

language, which pathetically describes the transition from the Ghetto life to modern culture. It showed that a phase of life which was vanishing, while it had to go, possessed some pathetic features, which deserved our love and admiration. Nowhere, however, did this pathos appear more strongly than in the literature of the Russian Jew. They formed large communities, were more distinctly separate from their environment by their language and mode of life, and finally suffered more severely from the prejudices of the world around them.

The world's literature will no doubt at some time be enriched by this chapter containing the achievements of the Russian Jews in their Hebrew, Russian and Yiddish writings, and amongst the names which represent this activity stands out, as one of the best, the name of Ezekiel Leavitt.

I do not think that the literature of the whole world contains one genius who was able to write poetry in two languages. Even a prose writer in two languages, who has acquired any standing in the literature of both nations, is exceedingly rare. It would seem, however, that the Russian Jew is unique in this respect. Unable to judge the Russian, I must say that both the Hebrew and the Yiddish works of Ezekiel Leavitt possess great poetic merit. His muse is distinctly Jewish, he gives expression to the griefs and to the pathos of the Jewish soul, produced by the unparalleled sufferings of his people. He sings of Israel's hope, and he wails over Israel's woes. He presents to us the touching conflict between the simplicity of the old, who are happy in the midst of their afflictions, and the impatience of the young, who yearn for a life of freedom, comfort and unhampered intellectual progress. I am sure that all lovers of the beautiful and all admirers of true poetry and of literary art will wish Mr. Leavitt success in his literary activities.

Leavitt has amply experienced the difficulty of "arriving," which all men of genius have to combat with. He now has already a community of appreciative readers, in spite of the fact that most of the languages in which he writes have a limited public in the land where he lives. His poetical works will now appear in English, and thus conquer for themselves a larger public and win that recognition which they richly deserve.

A FOREWORD BY THE TRANSLATOR.

ALICE STONE BLACKWELL.

..

It has as yet been my privilege to read only a part of this author's poetical works; but these display some characteristics so marked that the reader feels sure they must reappear in all the poet's other writings.

1.) *These poems are idealistic, and often strike a high and noble note*, as in "My Creed."

2.) The author's spirit is intensely nationalistic. He is not only an idealist, but *distinctly and fervently a Hebrew idealist*. Wherever his body may be, his soul dwells in Zion. Over and over again, in different forms occurs the exhortation with which he closes "A Zionist Marseillaise."

The invincible passion with which the poet clings to this idea is very well expressed in his lines, "They Tell Me."

3.) The poems are profoundly mournful, as is to be expected of songs written under the shadow of the greatest tragedy of modern times—the Jewish persecutions in Russia. Many of them breathe the discouragement of an ardent spirit that started out with sanguine hopes of the speedy triumph of right and freedom throughout the world, only to become convinced by sad experience that the complete victory is still far in the future.

4.) The author is deeply imbued with the history of his race, a history so interesting and so wonderful that it is impossible for any open-minded person to read it without feeling his heart swell with pride over the achievements of the old Jewish heroes and heroines. This feeling is of course tenfold stronger in those who share the same ancient and heroic blood. Mr. Leavitt's poetical gift attains some of its highest flights in descanting upon the old glories of Israel, as in his remarkable poem "To My Nation."

5.) The poet is indefatigable in urging his people to live up to their record.

6.) Mr. Leavitt has good ability to impress a moral by means of a fable or parable, as is shown, for instance, in his humorous poem "The Pig."



7.) The poems are *characterized by fiery indignation against wrong, often enforced with striking similes and illustrations*, as in "The False Prophets." Sometimes as in "The Poet to the Public," there is a note of what sounds like arrogance, but is perhaps only the legitimate self-assertion of the idealist against surrounding materialism, or the exaltation by the poet of his art in the face of coarse and stupid depreciation of the divine mission of poetry. Sometimes a beautiful bit of description of natural scenery occurs in the midst of a philosophical poem, as, for instance, in his poem "The Prophet."

It is true of Mr. Leavitt, as of all other poets, of all nationalities, that the most valuable among his poems are those which inspire courage and predict the inevitable triumph of right. A good example is "The Streamlet."

THE POET TO THE PUBLIC.

My house is heaven, the angels are my friends;
My comrades—flowers, and birds that sweetly call.
Loud-sounding praises do not make me glad,
The critic's censure grieves me not at all.

Oh, I have studied you, my brethren dear!
I know you, pigmies, know you through and through!
You can not comprehend or feel my songs,
Writ with a pen that tears and blood bedew.

You can not understand. Life's daily prose
Has blunted all your feelings long ago.
I only wonder at your impudence
In mocking poetry: "We want it so!"

Trust me, you will not make the poet fear,
Nor choke his voice divine, his song sublime.
His duty is to sing and wake men's hearts,
And he will do it always, every time.

Yea, the true poet does not ask for thanks.
His just reward, let Fortune smile or frown,
Lies in his work; he feels in his sick heart
That he is of humanity the crown.

To the true poet all must honor give;
His artist glance you should not render sad.
He is your father, brother, and your judge,
Your comrade in good fortune and in bad!

A LION'S SPIRIT.

Within me, even from my youth,
 A lion's spirit dwells.
 High do I rise; toward mighty deeds
 My heart aspires and swells.

No power as master do I own,
 I do not bow the head,
 I creep before no potentate,
 Nor fear his terror dread.

A lion's soul within me dwells;
 I scorn small things, mean wiles;
 I scoff at all the creatures base
 Who walk with cringing smiles;

Who kiss each proud commander's hand,
 And fawning, day by day,
 Before each wretched upstart bow,
 And his commands obey.

God gave me thirst for great ideals,
 And, from my earliest breath,
 Before a dog's life, I with joy
 Would choose a lion's death.

MY CREED.

O Mother Nature, gifts deserving scorn
 I do not need; for other gifts I yearn—
 Love's changeless gifts. To suffer I am fain;
 Gold tempts me not; its glittering lure I spurn.

I would not be a base, unworthy slave;
 A flatterer's cringing life I do not prize.
 The soulless world will not receive my words,
 But happy he for his ideals who dies!

What need have I of notice, of men's praise?
My sorrow is a stranger to them all.
To fools my sufferings seem ridiculous;
A thing of naught my trouble they would call.

They laugh; they do not wish to comprehend;
Yet enmity has in my breast no part.
Lovers of mockery, passion's slaves! for you
Only a sorrowing scorn dwells in my heart.

THEY TELL ME.

They tell me, "Give thy nation up,
The ancient graves resign!
Give us thy soul—then plenty, wealth,
And greatness shall be thine."

They tell me: "Think not to rebuild
The City, proud and tall,
Of whose old splendor there is left
Only a crumbling wall.

"Dream not thy nation to arouse
Out of its slumber deep.
Behold, it has so many years
Lain in a marmot's sleep!"

False prophets, hush! Fie, charlatans!
I swerve not from the goal.
I will not give my honor up,
I will not sell my soul.

The path my fathers trod through life
I follow, straight and clear;
Should death demand me, I will mount
The scaffold without fear.

My God, my race, I will not change
For gold or jewels' fires.
More than a stranger's treasure-house,
A grave among my sires!

TO THE POET.

O poet, never bow thy head and yield
Unto the foolish and indifferent throng,
And never to the men of power and place
Sell thy clear-sounding and impartial song!

Wage war on wickedness with all thy might;
Wake love within men's hearts—a noble task;
And strive to dust and ashes to reduce
Falsehood that hides its face behind a mask!

Sow kindness and sow knowledge everywhere;
With courage walk the rugged path and hard;
For the unfortunate, compassion wake,
And never from the crowd expect reward!

THE POET.

My pen has made me many foes, indeed,
And for my writings I was laid to bleed
On Russia's altar, sacrificed in youth.
Yet the truth only shall I write alway;
I in the camp of falsehood will not stay:
Nothing is dear to me except the truth.

Honor and wealth I do not ask of life;
One goal alone I aim for in the strife—
 To bring more light into a darksome place.
The rich I ne'er shall flatter with my pen,
And at the purchased souls of venal men
 I shall laugh always, boldly, to their face.

Like to the prophet must the poet be,
A judge of strict and stern integrity.
 Ridiculous and wretched he must prove
The men whose consciences are dead—who spurn
Of freedom and equality to learn.
 The poet must be like to God above!

BE SILENT, POET.

Poet, be mute! There is no need of songs.
 Be hushed, as silence now the world doth fill.
Within the shade by reddening cherries cast
 Sits one who, like to thee, is waking still.

It is the bard of love, the nightingale;
 O'er the soft rose he trills, within the glen.
Night has descended with its dreamy hush.
 Poet, be silent! In the hearts of men

Seek thou no welcome for thyself; alas!
 No sympathy among them thou wilt find.
They cannot understand the poet's dreams;
 Thou all alone shalt leave the world behind.

Thou, by the crowd misunderstood, shalt go,
 One among all, a stranger to the rest,
With all thy wondrous dreams within thy brain,
 And with thy loving heart within thy breast.

They laugh at thee. But when the time is come
Thou wilt begin to sing at eventide,
And in a tranquil wave, all full of light,
Songs shall gush forth and flow. Then, circling wide,

And trilling, over thee shall rise and soar
Thy nightingale, love's singer, from the glade.
Like thee, the crowd can comprehend him not—
One lonely poet in the branches' shade.

MY SONG IS POISONED!

("All My Songs Are Poisoned."—Heine.)

'Twas in the Russian land, where they dig graves
For high ideals, and where the fist is law;
Where tyrants rule, whose kindness is like dew,
Their righteousness like webs which spiders draw;

Russia, where dark fanaticism reigns,
Land of oppression, blood-stained, filled with groans;
Russia, whose soul is but the penny-piece,
Whose Emperor grinds fine the people's bones;

Russia, whose iron-clad heaven and brass-bound earth
Are fortified from every ray of light;
The cruel land, whose noblest sons are chained
And locked within grim prisons dark as night;

'Twas in the Russian land, alas! dear friend,
That I was born, and knew deep suffering;
There passed my youth, there vanished my life's spring,
There I grew gray, not seeing one good thing.

'Twas there my grandmother my cradle rocked,
Wept o'er me, sang a song of woe profound,
Breathing her grief, so sad that in the wall
E'en the stones shook and trembled at the sound.

There on her withered cheeks I oft saw tears—
Cheeks wrinkled ere the time by pain and care;
And in the hush of night I heard her sighs—
Telling that she, poor woman, scarce could bear

The burden that was laid on her by Fate—
Hard, bitter Fate, which at the poor doth laugh—
Which crushes and breaks down the wretched soul
Till she destroys it, as the fire burns chaff.

My mother's sighs and all her bitter tears,
Shed scalding hot, and seething like a fire,
Poisoned my song, e'en in my tender youth;
And so my song is filled with poison dire!

OH, IF!

Once I chanced to read an ancient legend,
Such as old traditions to us bring.
Underneath the sky of far-off Thracia,
Where are many harbingers of spring—

Violets in plenty, breathing fragrance,
And a multitude of purple flowers,
Golden fields and pastures in abundance,
Shady gardens with their cooling bowers;

Where the sky is azure and transparent
As the tears of innocence may be;
Where, beneath the sun's red rays illumined,
Meads are decked with verdure fair to see;

Where, in a wide ribbon passing onward,
Ranks of desert steppes the traveler views—
In a tent with garlands wreathed and woven,
Orpheus dwelt, the favorite of the Muse.

Full of inspiration was this singer,
Marvelous his songs, that floated wide.
By the magic of his wondrous music
Many he attracted to his side.

When he sings, all other things are silent,
As if all the world beside were dead—
As if all the birds from heaven had vanished,
All the songsters of the wood were fled.

Birds and rocks and billows of the ocean
All gave ear, in silent, mute delight,
To the sweet outpourings of his spirit,
And his lyre's clear tunes of sacred might.

To his tent ferocious beasts came also,
Pushing through their heads, in tamest guise;
They would lick his footsteps, dumbly, gently,
With a fire unearthly in their eyes.

Oh, if but that lyre of wondrous sweetness
Of the singer Orpheus I possessed,
I would wander then the wide world over,
And would sing my songs from east to west.

With the lyre's rich notes of magic sweetness
I would then begin the beasts to tame,
And with words most burning and most potent
All men's hearts I then would set aflame.

MY POOR JEW!

My miserable brother, my poor Jew,
How sad for aye thy singing in the night!
Thou to thy fate art nothing but a slave;
Where'er thou turn'st, thou findest not thy right.

Thou art a martyr, thou hast suffered long
From men, from beasts; each snake with poison dart
Smites thee; for what, my brother, for what crime?
Because thou weak and very patient art!

Because thou lettest burdens break thy neck,
And bearest silently thy heavy chains;
Because thou bowest down to kiss the rod
That flays thee, and is reddened from thy veins.

Oh, my poor nation, it is time to wake,
To live with wisdom, not absorbed by pelf.
'Tis time for thee to comprehend thy state,—
Look not for miracles, but work thyself!

HEBREW CRADLE SONG.

Night has on the earth descended,
All around is silence deep.
Sleep, my darling, I am with thee;
Sleep a calm and peaceful sleep!

I no lullabies shall sing thee;
Songs are at an end tonight.
Sleep in peace, oh, sleep on sweetly,
Long as sleep thou canst, my light!

In our native fields aforetime
 Wondrous songs we used to sing,
Improvising them in gardens
 Turning green with early spring,
Where grew daffodils and myrtles,
 Stately palms upreared their height,
Cypress trees spread wide their branches,
 Splendid roses blossomed bright.
But those notes are hushed and silenced;
 Ruined now our Zion lies;
Mourning sounds instead of singing;
 Yea, for songs we hear but sighs.
All thou needs must know, my darling,
 Of thy nation's piteous plight,
Thou wilt learn, and weep for sorrow
 As thy mother weeps tonight.
But why now in vain disturb thee?
 Let thy tranquil slumber last
Until over thee, my dearest,
 The dark day of rain hath passed!
To the school, my son, I'll lead thee
 By the hand: thou there shalt learn
All our Bible and our knowledge.
 Wondrous pearls thou wilt discern—
Pearls of wisdom in our Talmud,
 Gems our sages' lore affords;
Thou shalt taste of prayer's first sweetness
 And the charm of God's great words.
Ne'er forget thou art a Hebrew!
 Little son, remember well,
Even to thy grave, the stories
 That thy mother used to tell!

MY LOSS.

My trust in human beings I have lost;
Selfish are most of them, and insincere;
More than enough of promises they make,
But when to action called—they disappear.

My youthful strength and vigor I have lost;
I to the world have given them away.
Pain without end, and countless woes of Job,
Are what the world has given me in pay.

The fire that God had kindled in my heart
I've lost in my dark life-path among men.
My hopes have perished, all my dearest hopes;
Ah, shall I ever find them once again?

TOGETHER.

In life thou hast already suffered much,
Though thou art yet but young in years today;
And, striving always, thou dost find thyself
Forever from thy goal more far away.

Thou art still young, and yet thy heart is old
Already, aged by suffering, pain and care.
The world like a dead figure seems to thee,
That has no future, no tomorrow fair.

Broken thy loving heart has been by time,
As tender blossoms by the rough winds' strife.
Oh, vast and infinite the grief and pain,
That thou hast suffered at the hands of life!

My child, my loving, true and suffering child,
My life is all made up of sorrowing fears;
Like drifting smoke the wind has borne away
The sweet, rich dreams of my more youthful years,

Which the deceiver, Hope, had woven for me,
Of friendship, love and peace. To win my end
Far more than thou already have I striven;
With what result? An empty dream! Dear friend,

I am a broken vessel! Comfortless
My morrow as today and yesterday.
My life is worse than death; and all my hours
In sighing and complaining pass away.

No ray of consolation can I see;
My brightest day, alas! is dark as night,
And my sad soul is sick and suffering
As if it lay beneath a poison blight.

Give me thy hand, my love, my faithful friend!
Abandon not the poet far away!
Perhaps together we may have the power
To hope with courage for a better day!

I hope that thou wilt wake my strength anew,
And still refresh it, in the years to be—
That thou wilt give to me a glorious May,
And I more songs and new shall sing for thee,

Of love, of hope; and suffering and grief
No more shall make our joy and gladness pale.
Dear, only give to me thy hand and heart;
Together we will struggle, win or fail.

I LOVE THEE.

I love thee as a rose loves
The dawn's first ray serene;
I love thee as the birds love
The shadowy forest green;

Or as the snow-white lily
Loveth the whisper low
And tender of the zephyr—
I love thee even so.

My young friend, my May-lily,
I love thy fair eyes' light
As a girl loves the lustre
Shed from the diamond bright!

ROMANCE.

"Oh, I shall love thee, dear, with constancy!
I swear that I will ever faithful be!"
This didst thou promise, darling, and my heart,
Which time had broken, beat again—breathed free.

To me the world became a paradise
Where only roses bloom, and all is well.
I spent whole hours in rapture and delight;
Lost courage came again my heart to swell.

I found again my faith in deity;
I better knew its value and its worth;
For men are looking for the Lord on high,
And I had found my deity on earth.

Thou, darling, wast my deity, my soul,
My wealth, my Muse, my pride and happiness;
Thou wast the consolation of my life;
Thy gentle glance had power my heart to bless.

But when thou knew'st I was a poet, dear,
And Rothschild's wealth than mine was slightly more,
Then thou didst soon recover from thy love,
And thou didst close against me thy heart's door.

I a discarded amulet became;
Thou charmest now a richer man than I.
Gold is more precious to thee than my Muse,
And thou hast bidden her thy last good-bye.

TO A FRIEND.

An orphan I grew up—no fondling sweet
Knew I; no kisses, no embraces dear.
Far from my country, only other's tales
Always and everywhere I used to hear.

Beloved friend, above my childish crib
No mother, smiling, sang me loving rhymes.
The cold steppes served me often for a bed,
And I to suffer grief began betimes.

Without caresses tender passed my youth,
Without sweet words, soft laughter, mirthful strains,
'Neath ceaseless thunder of harsh curses wild,
And 'neath the clang of heavy, crushing chains,

And under threats loud shouted, fierce and stern,
Forgotten, I at night would fall asleep;
And my oppressor with the morning's light
Would meet me with new malice dark and deep,

And on me long with cold derision gaze.

With fear I shuddered at his aspect black.

"Parentless pilgrim, say, whence comest thou?"

And, "From the Ghetto," I would whisper back.

"The Ghetto? Leave us quickly! There return;

Live there and die there!" Thus his rough words flowed.

And, taking up my staff and shouting harsh,

I went again to wander on the road.

I wandered on, and burning songs of woe,

A timid outcast, I sang o'er and o'er.

My heart would languish—but a ray of hope

Soothed it and warmed it softly, evermore.

I prayed in faith, in faith profound and deep;

Always I hoped, how sharp so'er my pain.

'Neath a strange sky exhausted oft I grew,

And oft I fell, but always rose again.

And still from year to year I wait—I wait,

And drain the bitter cup of woe and wrong.

'Tis in the people's name these pains I bear,

'Tis for the people that I sing my song!

WHAT SHALL I SING?

What shall I sing, my friend? E'en now, within my Muse's lips,

There waits, prepared and guarded and hidden, my lament—

An ancient song of mourning that I sang long years ago.

It has not ceased; and ever from the treasury unspent

Of my own tears, increasing still, I draw it day by day;

Over the loss of all my hopes, foretelling lofty things,—

Over the loss of all my dreams, that promised balm for grief,—

The loss of youth, and those bright days to which youth's halo
clings.

I shall not sing, my colleague! I am a mourner now,
And for my youthful hopes I have already dug a tomb.
My good dreams all have passed away—alas, they are no more!
My heart is emptied out, and naught dwells in that vacant room.

New pains lift up their eyes to me, and o'er my woe I weep,
And o'er the ruin a dark fate has on my nation sent.
What shall I sing, my friend? Alas, my sad and bitter life
Has taught me only how to weep and openly lament.

Within the Ghetto I was born, within a corner dark.
Naught but laments and mourning songs I heard in that sad place.
Since from my mother's womb I came, down to the present day,
Lo, Life has shown me nothing but a stern and angry face.

Within the happy, joyous world I like a mourner dwell.
My heart is young, and yet, alas, my strength has passed away.
My friend, from my youth upward I have striven still for light,
Have lifted my soul up toward it forever, night and day.

To study I devoted my time of early youth,
My spirit and the essence of my soul to this I gave.
For brotherhood and friendship I have striven all my days,
And to embrace the whole broad earth my eager heart did crave.

Love—so I thought—will surely root out haughtiness and pride,
And every downcast spirit then will find its longed-for rest.
I thought that blissful time was near when crime and wrong shall
cease,

And we shall hear no more the cry for help of the oppressed.

Then from the heads of monarchs the crown shall be removed,
And parted justly among those whom fortune had forgot.
'Twas thus I thought; and so in hope I lifted up my voice
And sang my songs—the songs of joy increased and faltered not.

Now 'mid the ruins of my past I stand and weep my dead—
My old-time hopes.—Alone am I, and hushed is now my lute.
My song's voice on a sudden has failed, and ceased to sound;
My inspiration all has fled, my Muse is still and mute.

ELEGY.

The night is silent, like a graveyard hushed;
The night is black and darksome, like a tomb.
Exiled, alas! far distant from my home,
I sit alone and careworn in my room.

And thoughts, all dark and mournful like my fate,
Cloud over my sick heart, a gloomy train.
Endless and infinite my sorrows are;
A fathomless abyss is now my pain.

I sit alone, I hear no rustle stir;
Dead silence reigns, and doth the chamber fill.
The sky as if with pity gazes down;
The night is hushed and mute, the night is still.

Not many years ago I yet was young;
I hoped, I thought, with sanguine ardor deep,
I surely should be able with my songs
To bring great comfort unto those that weep.

I hoped a golden age would quickly come,
That soon a good and gracious day would rise,
And that songs freely chanted, strong and new,
Would drown the sound of sorrow and of sighs.

I hoped that all humanity ere long
Would wisdom gain, would mighty grow and strong,
And with a voice as of a hundred lions
Would roar: "Enough! Enough of suffering wrong!"

"Enough of being endlessly enslaved,
And bearing, like a horse, the yoke from birth!
All human beings surely ought to live;
The world is rich, and large the teeming earth."

'Twas thus I thought; but now I understand
That my ideal is distant many years.
I hear the sighs and sobbing of the weak;
On every side I witness flowing tears.

A wide, dense vapor still obscures the sky
Of all humanity, and clouds it o'er.
The old chains strongly clank, and day by day
They still are forging new ones, more and more.
* * * * *

The night is silent, like a graveyard hushed;
I sit alone and careworn, without sleep.
My heart is crushed and broken by despair;
I write my mournful song, and weep and weep.

A LAMENTATION.

Already centuries have passed away
Since the great woe befell our race and name,
Enveloping our sky in darkest night.
Since then we have endured the utmost shame;
For foreign sins a sacrifice are we;
We sigh, we weep—he laughs, our enemy!

Three times already have they bent our pride;
To stifle down the spirit free they seek
That gives us strength to suffer all this pain.
To us the world has grown a graveyard bleak,
And from the world, in terror and in dread,
We must beg justice, as a beggar bread.

We have no place where we may sit secure;
The cruel foe advances like a gale,
A whirlwind, shattering all things in its path,
And neither prayers nor tears can then avail.
The Hebrew homes are soon a mass of flame,
The Hebrew daughters suffer deadly shame.

How great is our misfortune and our woe!

We are tired out with waiting, hopes and fears.
Bitter and heavy is our banishment;

Like slaves we bear the chains of these long years.
We have no arms but what are powerless here—
A lamentation sad, a prayer, a tear.

Oh, many of us have in exile changed

The Hebrew ways for foreign follies vain,
Have left the Hebrew God for golden calves.

And what has chanced? My nation, racked with pain!
Lo! thou among the nations canst not rise;
They ridicule thee, and thy name despise!

Oh, when at last shall be an end of tears?

Oh, when shall we see rising, bright and clear,
The Hebrew star above our pathway dark,

So full of thorns for many a weary year?
When will the noise of rushing waves be o'er?
When will our little boat attain the shore?

The shore of Zion, holy and beloved,

Where, as we hope, again shall bloom and shine
For us the flowers of Sharon, as of yore.

Dear to me, Zion, each small stone of thine—
Sacred and dear; a love that can not fail
Burns in my bosom for thy every vale!

My heart will overbrim with happiness

When thee, my Holy Land, at last I see,
And on thy ruins press an ardent kiss.

Meanwhile, I still am distant far from thee,
And send to thee, O Zion, this my lay—
An exile's greeting, breathed from far away!

ON RUSSIA'S FRONTIER.

For the last time I lifted up mine eyes
To see the land wherein so many years
I suffered wrong, where buried lies my hope.
I would have wept, but frozen were my tears.

In vain I strove to sigh; my broken heart
Was changed to stone, alas! congealed its blood.
For the last time my native country's sky
Spread o'er my head; like one fresh stunned I stood.

Upon my lips there hovered curses deep;
Cursed be Russia, bloodstained, without ruth,
That loves fools only, and detests the wise—
Those who aspire to freedom, justice, truth!

Brothers in exile lay in slumber there,
Brothers my love for whom is warm and great;
And I have left them, and my sad soul sighs,
Their spirit has been broken by their fate.

I know; I suffered with them; oh, we all
Suffered together in the vale of tears!
Russia's frontier for the last time I see;
Oh, cursed be that land of pain and fears!

Cursed her populace, that kiss the rod!
Had the poor people not in sleep lain low,
Had they said, "Take away the smiting rod!"
Sceptre and Czar had vanished long ago.

Brothers in exile, given o'er to pain,
For whom the bright sun shines not on his rounds,
Who in their slavery persist, and live
The lives of dogs—oh, could I heal their wounds!

Oh, could I make their mournful faces glad,
Now wrinkled ere their time, with grief and wrong
All clouded o'er! Oh, could I let them hear
A song as fresh as springtime, new and strong,

That could console the mourners, the forlorn!
Oh, could I make them all forget their pain—
Sweeten their fate, their suffering sweep away,
Destroy the slavery and break the chain!

MY CURSE.

In all of the houses of prayer in which Mary's son's worshipers meet,
The multitudes greater had grown; the voice of loud chanting
was heard.
The priests of the household of falsehood their own disobedience hid,
And to all of the folk of the city they preached pure morality's
word.

To the houses of prayer all the Christians were streaming, because on
that day
For them all it was holiday time; today is their great Easter feast.
Their faces are beaming with joy in the clear, pleasant rays of the
sun;
The sun from the clouds has come forth, and the warmth of the
air has increased.

Bright now shines the sun in the heavens; his light is spread widely
abroad,
Like a canopy made all of gold, in the infinite height of the sky;
And crowds upon crowds have walked out, and the fair city garden
is filled
As full as a nestful of birds ere the fledgelings have learned how
to fly.

The fair city garden is full; there is merriment, singing and joy;
From near and from far on the air the notes of gay laughter are
shed.

Sweet winds as of Eden are blowing; the air is all balmy and mild,
And like to a carpet unrolled, the heavens above are outspread.

The trees, purifying themselves for the Spring, have their part in
the feast;

The flower joys in playing in love with the bud, by the soft
zephyr stirred;

In the warm, gentle light of the sun dance the butterflies, flitting about,
And sometimes the birds 'mid the boughs let the notes of their
music be heard.

But lo! on a sudden, a tumult, all blent with wild laughter, arose;
It filled all the streets and the squares, and increased like the
noise of a flood;

Base creatures, mean, little and low, who had grown to be great in
a night,

Began now to shout with loud voices, all clamoring, "Plunder
and blood!"

"Destruction," they shouted, "destruction and death to the seed of
the Jews!

The Government thus has decreed, and already has given com-
mands.

Our arm is supreme; let us go forth today through the city in bands,
And fill up our homes with rich booty (oh, joy!), which lies
waiting our hands."

And so they went forth, the destroyers, grandchildren of Satan—
yea, all

The messengers of the Inferno, the hateful companions of hell.
And then the great slaughter began, and they slew old and young,
great and small;

They cut down on the right and destroyed on the left, in their
cruelty fell.

The homes of the Jews they demolished, they razed them, foundations and all;

They spared not the aged, nor pitied the nursing babe, blind to its fate;

The maidens they outraged—crushed virgins were weltering there in the streets

As refuse lies cast out unheeded, unpitied—their numbers, how great!

They smote and they outraged—O Lord of the Universe, where wast Thou then,

When the hand of the stranger was mighty, uplifted to strike and to slay?

Ah, why did Thy thunders not hurl their deep voice from the heavens on high,

To crush him, the foul, fiendish tyrant, destroy him and sweep him away?

How long shall the government base of the Romanoffs yet hold its sway,

The rule that breeds crime and brutality? God of salvation, I pray,

Oh, list to my voice! Wipe it out! And the sceptre shall pass and depart,

And vanish away from the hand of its leader forever and aye!

Oh, pour out, Almighty, I pray Thee, Thy wrath on that country accurst,

Or. Russia, that knows not compassion, that counts might for right in the strife!

For the blood of Thy servants Thy vengeance among all the nations make known,

And blot Russia out evermore from the book of existence and life!

TO THE EXECUTIONER.

You are rejoicing; at my every tear
 You laugh! Well, at my fate laugh on with glee!
Before you, murderer, I lose not heart;
 Dare not imagine me a coward to be!

I weep, but these are not the tears of fear;
 I can face calmly and without affright
All tortures, every hellish punishment;
 I weep because the army of the right

Loses in me a soldier and a friend
 Who proudly bore our sacred banner high;
But I am calm, and ready without fear
 To fall a prey to you, my enemy!

Delay not to erect your altar, Cain—
 Altar of Satan, whereon I must bleed.
To slay your fellow-creatures is your trade;
 Then, heartless one, make haste to do your deed!

But all of you will some day be repaid
 A hundredfold for all the blood you shed;
To pillories of shame you will be dragged,
 There to be nailed till centuries have fled.

TIME.

Time, our enemy and our instructor,
Thou our judge and our deliverer art,
Executioner and strong defender;
Joy and gladness, tears and grief of heart,
Wailing and despairing lamentation,
Love and hope, whate'er the soul elates—
All these divers things Time brings unto us;
He it is destroys, and he creates.
Time, I pray thee, give to me oblivion!
In it my enjoyment I will find;
Peaceful slumber after toilsome labor.
Lure me not where dwell, to snare the mind,
Hopes and happiness! Lo, cold and hunger,
Dreariness and every bitter thing,
For these many years my breast have wasted.
Now I do not sing, I do not sing!
I have sought in life for joy and gladness,
I have sung and prayed and waited long,
But I am discouraged and disheartened!
Now a song of pain, a mournful song,
May be sung—a song of castle-building,
And of poverty, disgrace, defeat.
Time, oh, let me die, or grant oblivion!
In it I will find enjoyment sweet.

A PRAYER.

O, Thou great God, my invocation hear!
Hear from on high in heaven, I pray to Thee!
My path is thorny; only pain and grief
And suffering has my fate doled out to me.
But I complain not of harsh destiny;
I to the needful can my mind subdue;
When the storm comes, I weep my fill, and then,
With spirit keen, enter the fray anew.

O Thou great God, hear Thou the prayer I make!
I call on Thee for aid. Almighty Lord,
To the unhappy grant forgetfulness,
To orphans and the homeless, warmth afford.

Into the hearts of cruel men instill
Love for those scorned by fortune, near or far,
And the hard pathway by the lonely trod
Illuminate, O Father, with Thy star!

Strengthen the youthful powers; forsake them not
In the dread hour of trial and of fight!
Into the nooks where now there dwells a gloom
As of the sepulchre, Lord, send more light!

MY TOMBSTONE.

Oh, I am weak and ill! I know, not long,
Brothers, shall I behold you, hear your speech.
Though I have lived and striven, yet my aim
Ever and ever I have failed to reach.

Oh, I have lived and loved with all my heart
The persecuted, those the yoke who bear;
And oft by night, when silent was the world,
My bitter "Woe!" was breathed upon the air.

Now I am weak and ill; I hear Death creep
Close to my door—he soon will cross the sill.
He will extinguish soon my light of life,
Where it in anguish burns within me still.

Something I wish to ask of you, my friends:
Dig me a grave where forest boughs are stirred
By a soft wind, where flows a fair, clear stream,
And where a song divine is always heard.

Place o'er my grave a very simple stone,
And write upon it, "Here a poet lies;
He fought with vehemence, and thoughts of love
Spoke in his verse alone, in tender guise.

"With honesty he hated and he loved;
He often warmed with truth the hearts of men.
Now from life's heavy burden he is free,
And Death has broken for all time his pen."

TO MY NATION:

My nation! Ah, I recognize thee not!
What on a sudden has become of thee?
Art thou the same "wise nation" as of yore,
The hero of past years, the brave, the free?

Where is thy strength, thy understanding now?
Where is thy name, and where thy old-time worth?
Where are thy treasure and thy temple found?
Where is thy dwelling, where thy native earth?

Where art thou, my beloved one, by day,
And where by night? Where dost thou sleep, where rest?
Hast thou a place where thou mayest lean thy head?
Nay, all men thrust thee forth, unwelcome guest!

They hunt thee, smite thee, burn thee, without ruth,
Pursue thee, and like leeches suck thy blood;
Ah, they tear out the marrow of thy bones!
Thy persecutions are a ceaseless flood.

The world to thee a graveyard has become;
Thou seest but tombs, where'er thy glances fall.
Wild beasts that claim to bear the name of men '
Have changed thy life to bitterness and gall.

They cast reproach on thy antiquity,
Thy nobleness, thy faith; thy flag they tear;
Do thee dishonor, injury and wrong;—
And thou, alas, my brother, dost not care!

Thy Bible, God and Talmud they blaspheme,
They trample on them with a scornful heart;
And all this seems to thee of no concern.
Brother, thou hast forgotten who thou art!

Yea, thou art wholly changed, O Israel!
Thou hast forgot thy value and thy worth.
Thou fearest, tremblest, creepest like a worm,
And before all men bowest to the earth.

Looking upon thee, my beloved one,
My heart is rent in twain and filled with gall.
I see that every drunkard flouts thee now,
And yet, alas! this moves thee not at all!

Brother, no persecution touches thee,
No stone, no blow, no pain, no deep disgrace.
By traffic thou art wholly borne away,
And every "Katsap" smites thee in the face.

Thou fallest oft asleep, and dost through sleep
Miss thy desires; and this thou thinkest right.
Enough of slumber, Israel, my love!
Enough of suffering 'neath affliction's blight!

Wake, rub thine eyes! Thou shalt not bow the head
Before each man with power to strike a blow.

O my poor nation! Prince of all the East!

Thou wast an eagle once, long years ago—

An eagle, cleaving with her wings the clouds,

And resting in the lap of heaven, elate.

To thee the Cherubim were wont to sing,

“Thou, Israel, art noble, thou art great!”

The sun upon thy proud and mighty head

Was wont of old to shed a myriad rays;

The stars of heaven used to beckon thee,

And speed before thee through the sky's blue ways.

Exalted, proud and fearless wast thou then;

Thou strovest aye for light, with yearning strong.

Why hast thou now become e'en as a worm

That bows itself, and crawls and creeps along?

Thou art the son of heroes of renown,

World-famous men, to whom God's favor clave;

From Joshua and King David thou art sprung,

The bravest hero among all the brave.

Forget not, brother, the Hasmoneans,

The noble Maccabees, who knew no fears!

And thou art musing upon empty dreams,

And hast endured, alas, so many years!

Israel, thou weepest, and considerest not

Whom thou dost shed thy bitter tears before.

Thy weeping, thy complaint, none wish to hear;

Thou art a laughing-stock, and nothing more.

Consider before whom thou dost complain,

Wiping away thy salt tears as they fall.

Thou criest, and they smite thee; thou complain'st,

And they pursue thee, for no cause at all.

O my poor nation! 'Tis high time for thee
To think it suits thee not the coward to play.
By thy complaints and cries, thy sighs and groans,
Unmoved the enemy remains alway.

He does not wish to hear thy groans, thy sighs;
He understands not thy complaint, thy moan.
Thy bitter crying cannot touch his heart.
His heart is made of iron, of flinty stone.

His heart is petrified; he will not hear
Thy truthful plea, how just soe'er thy case.
Israel, dream not! A tiger still will tear
The sheep, where'er they be, in every place.

As long as thou remainest but a sheep,
So long the tiger still will lap thy gore.
Awake, O Israel, thine ancient strength!
Resume the courage of the days of yore!

Thy Sampson's courage, who victoriously
From his bound hands the fettering ropes did rend.
Arise, my nation! Rise, and break thy chains,
And bring thy years of exile to an end!

AFTER THE BASLE CONGRESS.

What is all this tumult in our nation?
Tell me, darling, for I fain would know.
"For the sake of a great cause and holy,
Forward, brethren, forward let us go!"

Say of what they now their songs are singing,
All the brethren of our blood and race?
All around a holy "Rise!" re-echoes,
Expectation is on every face.

All await—what comfort? Who will bring it?
The Messiah, sought these many years?
Wherefore are they weeping? Why rejoicing?
Tell me why their joy is mixed with tears?

Poor our brethren are, I know, my darling,
And they are not suffered to complain;
And they cannot laugh with freedom—strangers
Drive them and oppress them, work them pain.

But, my dear, what is this agitation
Going on among them eagerly?
What these rumors, spread abroad among us?
Lively movement everywhere I see.

Songs of a new life I hear them singing,
Life of work and longed-for liberty—
Yea, a life in our own native country!
Can all this but an illusion be?

Or perhaps, my dearest, I am dreaming.
Mother, what my brothers read I heard.
I remember all of their discussions.
“It is time to waken!” was their word.

“Day is breaking, and the hour approaches
When the dawn our souls from sleep shall rouse.
We will go forth fearlessly and proudly
To our own fields, following the plows;

“Singing songs of toil. Let us go thither
Where, well guarded by the centuries long,
Stately palm trees grow, and where the daughters
Of Jerusalem once sang their song;

"Where the myrtles and the roses blossom.

Let us go o'er mountain and through wood,
In a company, all blithe and friendly;
Fearless, brethren, cross the sea's wide flood.

"On, press onward, helmsman! We should fear not;

The whole sea of pain we'll empty make,
Drop by drop, and to the bottom drain it
For our sacred old traditions' sake.

"In a silent prayer we'll name our martyrs.

Storms will cease when to our native strand
We have come. Messiah in full glory
Will appear then in our fatherland."

Tell me, dear, our fatherland, where is it?

Tell me, dearest, where? Do you not know?
Do heaven's angels dwell there? Do birds sing there?
There do lilies fair and roses blow?

Wondrous stories heard I from my grandsire

Of this fatherland, at eventide,
When he kept my drowsy lids from closing,
Whispering o'er me, sad and tearful-eyed:

"It is time for me to rest forever;

Aches my heart and shakes my aged hand.
Lord, I pray my grandchildren may see it,
Holy Zion, our dear native land!

"I believe that better times are coming;

Our poor nation from its sleep shall start,
And shall proudly raise the flag of freedom,
Crying, 'Forward! on, with fearless heart!'"

Why so often do they sing of Zion?
Why do thoughts of it disturb your rest?
Why now, mother, on all sides re-echoes
"Zion, oh, our native country blest!"?

"Zion!" thus the sorrowing mother whispered,
Fondling her loved darling o'er and o'er,
"Child! O dearest child of mine! In Zion
We shall have our own dear home once more!

"Zion is our faith, child!" "O, dear mother,
I can understand it all today,
And for that loved country of our fathers
I with longing and with tears will pray!"

SONGS OF ZION.

DESPAIR.

How heavy the fetters that bind me,
Mine exile how bitter and drear!
Nigh spent my endurance, and hope dies,
While sorrow is near!

How cruel the oppressors and mighty,
Who seek my defeat!
They laid low my glory, and trampled
As the dust of the street!

HOPE.

Within me yet Hope lives and quivers,
'Tis mine heritage old;
To my heart consolation she murmurs,
To soothe me makes bold.

And ever how gently she whispers :

“Despair not, O Israel’s line!

From the lights of fair Zion will gleam yet

The sun—yea, for thee it will shine!

“Through the cracks of the Wailing Wall streaming,

A new light shall gleam.

Across Lebanon’s tall cedars and ancient,

A mighty voice will proclaim :

“ ‘Shake thyself from the dust, O lost nation!

Thy life from the fetters, oh, save!

The land of thine exile abandon—

Stand upright and brave!’

“Remove, yea, cast off the dreaded shackles!

A slave is Israel, say?

Athwart the heights of Lebanon, O wanderer!

Shall dawn thy new day!”

REGENERATION.

On Zion’s fair shore, my songs as of yore

I will sing!

Through Sharon’s wide plain, my harp’s clear refrain

Shall ring!

In Freedom none grieves, they are bearing the sheaves

With great joy.

Here found they release, the oppressor shall cease

To destroy.

Zion’s children will now to the spade and the plow

Cling with their might.

Every daughter and son, to the vineyards will run

With delight.

And anew the sun, for the captive one,

Shall glorious shine!

She will mourn no more, but sing as of yore,

“Praise the Lord, the divine!”

A ZIONIST MARSEILLAISE.

I o'er our sad lot have already lamented;
With blood I have written, and not once alone.
I cannot rest now, for the question eternal,
"Oh, what avail tears, when our courage is flown?"

Through sighing and crying, my poor, wretched brethren,
No nation can ever its object attain.
In love we must all unite strongly together,
And work with sincerity, work might and main.

We must not look out for a single man's fortune,
But for our whole nation instead we must care;
And we must all seek to refresh and enliven
Our nation's sick soul, in all lands, everywhere.

Our life belongs not to ourselves but our nation.
O brothers, in unison work hard and long,
Until to our nation at last we give freedom,
To sing in our Zion once more a free song!

THE JEWISH MARSEILLAISE.

Defend your freedom! Heroes be, not cowards!
With courage enter on the righteous fight.
Despise the coward, who bows himself to kiss,
With fawning base, his foeman's rod of might.

Let not yourselves be trodden on like worms!
Your honor, dearest treasure, guard right well.
Better to lie as heroes in your graves
Than in rich palaces as slaves to dwell.

The Jews are rich in persecutors fierce,
And poor in helpers. Oh, their woe is great!
Enough of caring but for foreigners,
When they kill Jews like sheep, in rage and hate!

Enough of combating for those who think
Prisons are justice, might doth judgment make!
Do you not hear the weary Hebrews weep?
Where are you, champions? Waken now, oh, wake!

Wake, liberty and honor to defend,
And end the exile of the Jews at last!
Shatter and crush to bits the heavy chains
That until now have bound their hands so fast!

THE PROPHET.

When from heaven's veil the morning star comes forth,
Making her way 'twixt clouds with dawn aflush,
And in the boundless height her fair light spreads,
While o'er the world yet reigns a solemn hush,—
All eyes shut fast, earth wrapped in quiet sweet,—
The prophet is awake, and walks the street!

Slowly he walks, musing with head downbent,
His brows of wrinkles full, and sad his face.
His eyes are glowing like two coals of fire,
But on his lips a tender smile has place;
'Tis full of pity, full of sorrow mute;
And black his garments are from head to foot.

Silent the prophet walks. A wondrous day,
A day of spring! It seems, divine repose
Broods o'er the earth around; the sun darts fire,
The tall trees wave their leaves, the green grass grows;
The roses all with dewy freshness gleam,
As if they had been bathing in the stream.

As it would breathe a secret to the earth,

A soft and balmy wind is murmuring low;
It clings to her with yearnings of a son.

Sometimes the green leaves flicker to and fro,
And each to each in its own language says,
"The world is beautiful and full of grace!"

Mute walks the prophet, full of bitter grief.

The sun with golden rays illumines his way,
And on his head pours light and warmth in floods.

He looks not on the splendor of the day;
His heart is moved by utmost misery;
He cannot tell it: "Dumb and silent be!"

He cannot! All around are trickling tears,

The tears of the oppressed, grown used to grief,
Hated by fate, and by misfortune loved,

Who live in spirit, and whose days are brief;
Who in their own hot tears their bread must steep—
Their dry bread, earned with toil and anguish deep.

The prophet walks.—"The prophet is insane!"

Sometimes the wind brings to his ears this cry.
"Senseless he is; he opes his mouth in vain!"

Thus speak among themselves the passers-by,
Who break the Lord's commands, of shameless life,
Loving contention, calling out for strife.

The prophet walks. But now and then he halts,

And cries aloud, "Ye men of blood, woe, woe!
How long will ye plot harm against the poor?"

How long will ye oppress the needy? Lo,
Worse than wild beasts' your deeds; the people's flesh
You eat, as eats the moth a garment's mesh!

“The widow’s righteous claim ye do not heed,
Because she brings the judge no gift. Behold,
A bribe appeases wrath; judgment ye give
Still for the evil-doer who has gold,
Though deep be his transgression as a grave,
Because he fills your hands with what you crave.

“Vilely ye have provoked the Lord your God;
Like words of revelation seem to you
The Gentiles’ words; so ye bow down to Baal,
Break every law, serve a strange God and new.
You from your nation turn away and mock;
To you God’s word is grown a laughing-stock!

“Woe to ye, men of fraud! O men of blood!
Ye think within your hearts that ye are wise,
Your prophets, fools and blind; that evermore
Ye shall live on, as now, in prosperous guise.
E’en though ye sow injustice and speak lies,
Ye think that no avenger will arise.

“Make haste to wash and purify yourselves
Before that day, that fearful day has birth,
The day of pain, of punishment and woe,
When God shall rise to fill with awe the earth,
And deeds of violence to annihilate.
I see it, it is near, ’tis at the gate!”

The prophet walks; and now and then the wind
Brings to his ears, “The prophet is insane!
His words are folly all, and meaningless.”

Thus speak and say the scoffers, the profane—
Light-minded sinners, idly chattering still,
And trampling on the people’s heads at will.

When day is setting and the sun goes down,
And bright stars glitter in the heaven's blue,
He leaves the gathered scoffers, seeks his home,
And with hot tear-drops doth his bed bedew,
Praying, "O Lord, forgive this generation,
The children of Thy sore-afflicted nation!

"Behold and see how they are now disgraced
Among the nations! Fugitives are they
And wanderers; like shadows, lo, they roam,
And at each step of their unending way
They find but thorn and thistle 'neath their feet!
If Thou wouldst have them serve Thee as is meet,

"Hurl down the hostile throne! Oppression's power
Scatter like chaff!" And he forgetteth quite
The day of punishment, the day of wrath,
And sweet he finds the stillness of the night.
There hovers on his lips a lovely smile,
And peace divine rests on his head the while.

TO THE FALSE PROPHETS.

Ye speak in the name of the Lord, though the Lord hath not sent you;
Your tongues forge deceit, like your thoughts, which hypocrisies
blight.

Words softer than oil do ye give to all those who pass by you;
Within your hearts' temple, ye base ones, there burns not God's
light.

Till ye have performed deeds of evil, ye seek not your couches.
Ye with emptiness walk, and your fortress is malice and spite.

Ye speak peace with your lips, and war dwells in your hearts while
you speak it.

Like the pillar of cloud, on your threshold stands ever the sweet,
Pleasant lie, your beloved companion. Ye know that the rabble
Inflict on their censurers wounds undeserved and unmeet,
And that they in the eyes of the crowd can find favor no longer,
And therefore ye do not rebuke. And while walking the street,

Ye talk with the hypocrite's art to all those who approach you,
And flattery quits not your lips, which are smiling and cold.
You make it your shelter, it covers you over like armor.

You stretch out your hands to all villains to shake and to hold;
Your brother is fraudulent cunning, your friend, the God Baal;
Your idol is money, your master, the purse full of gold.

On your heads rest your 'sins, and through them ye shall perish and
vanish.

You strike those who see you with blindness, confusing their
thought,
And they do not see rightly; their eyes are closed, holden from seeing.
But all your misdeeds, ye base beings, will soon come to naught.
For, lo! the false prophets already are passing, departing,
Decreasing, diminishing—this hath the hand of Truth wrought!

THE VOICE OF GOD.

Day set; night fell—a wondrous lovely night,
A night of song, a balmy vernal night.
In heaven on high already shone the moon;
The earth around was wrapt in splendor bright.

In the thick wood, among the hidden boughs,
Already sang the mournful nightingale.
Her sweet song streamed abroad—I sat and heard;
With dreamy soul I listened to her tale.

Around me trees and flowers were whispering,
And in my heart old memories woke that night,
Forgotten in the day-time's noise and strife;
And I sat dreaming in the moon's soft light.

Then suddenly the sky's dark depths were oped,
And a strong voice from heaven rolled down to me;
Like unto mighty waters was the sound:
"If God hath caused His face to shine on thee,

"And made the holy spirit rest on thee,
And thou dost play the harp and sing aloud,
Do not be soft and pliant like a rush!
Bow not thy head before the rich and proud,

"Who trust in wealth, to whom a sigh is strange,
Who steel their heart, that ne'er with pity bleeds.
Be not a rush! Upon them pour thy wrath!
Proclaim aloud the foulness of their deeds!

"Reading, perchance their hearts may softer grow,
And from the worship of their wealth be freed.
They may become the helpers of the poor,
Who pass their days in poverty and need.

"Bard, if thou seest evil reign supreme
And strike down victims right and left, each hour,
Lift a dread voice on high and shatter it!
Rescue the robbed ones from the robbers' power,

"Not by main force, but mild and gentle words.
If insolent the low and young should be,
If pleasant Falsehood in the place of Truth
Strews for her creatures roses fair to see

“At every step, then, poet, waken thou!
On the despised lie bring thy tongue’s lash down!
If thou shouldst see a nation weak, bent low
By a hard yoke, ’neath strong oppression’s frown,

“That cries for help, with none at hand to aid,
To voice its wish, and its just cause defend,
Then, poet, let thy harpstrings strongly stir,
And throughout all the world, from end to end,

“Let there be heard a voice of loud complaint,
Storming like thunder ere the lightning darts,
Rushing with power, and breaking out in flame!
Softened perchance will be the stony hearts;

“They for the nation sore oppressed may pour
Comfort, shed on it drops of dew of light,
That make the body strong and cheer the heart.
Fear not, but prophesy aloud, with might!

“Ere from thy mother’s womb thou camest forth,
I to thy nation consecrated thee.
Be thou to it a true and faithful son,
And with thy words I still will present be!”

WHEREFORE?

It was night. The stars above us
Were lit up, in heaven to glow;
In the streets, like shining diamonds,
Sparkled bright the fluffy snow.

And the bushy little pine tree,
In a thick, white mantle dight,
Nodded to us at the window
With its top all snowy white.

And it seemed to me that evening,
It complained, the lonely tree,
Of its lot, so dark and dreary,
And its cruel destiny.

In my humble chamber sitting,
I was lost in memory's maze—
Sad and bitter recollections,
Thoughts of long-departed days.

I recalled my mother-country,
Far, forlorn, and wrapped in gloom,
Where my early life I wasted,
Where for joy I dug a tomb;

Where I loved, with young heart glowing,
Where I was beloved the while;
Where I suffered, suffered, suffered—
Suddenly, with gentle smile,

A wee girl comes up and whispers:
"Please remember, uncle dear,
That some pretty little stories
You have promised I should hear."

And her small black head bent toward me,
In her innocent desire,
And her eyes like stars were shining,
Lighted up with living fire.

"Say, then, charming child, what stories
Do you want, that you have heard?
Of the Czarevitch, young Ivan?
Of the wolf? The fairy bird?"

"Or about the beauteous daughter
Of the king beyond the seas?"
"No," the little girl made answer,
"No, I wish for none of these.

"From dear grandma I have heard them,
From my darling nurse as well.
From a lovely book, too, mother
Used those tales to read and tell.

"'Tis enough! No more I want them."
And she turned her little head,
Pouting: "Tell me about people!"
Thus the tiny maiden said.

"But I know not what to tell you."
"Listen, then, my uncle dear;
I will ask and you shall answer.
This is what I want to hear:

"Tell me why, from early morning,
Ere the dawn begins to peep,
My papa so hard must labor—
Why he slaves, and cannot sleep?"

"For a rich man he is working,
To get money—this is why—
That for you, mamma, your brothers,
Charming presents he may buy."

"But what presents can he give us?
Oftentimes for bread, black bread,
Do we wait with eager longing.
Gray already is his head.

"Father comes home bent and pallid,
While in some delightful spot
He keeps holiday, that rich man,
Living high and toiling not.

"Uncle dear, oh, tell me wherefore
All things are arranged so ill—
Why one hand, with greedy grasping,
Seizes everything at will?

"Why at the expense of others
Do the rich men live? Oh, why?"
And her eyes with tears were darkened,
Like the sun when clouds float by.

"In the world there are bad people;
They have wrought these wrongs so deep.
You will know when you are older;
Now be off, and go to sleep!"

And she went. To me creation
Deaf and dumb all seemed to lie;
In my ears one cry was ringing:
"Wherefore, wherefore? Why, oh, why?"

TO THE WORKMEN.

To you, my sisters and my brothers poor,
Scattered throughout the world these many years,
Who cold and hunger patiently endure,
To you I write my songs with blood and tears.

I never shall write flatteries to the rich,
I never with my pen shall business do.
With you, ye persecuted, I shall stay,
And I shall laugh with you and weep with you.

God's little world is glorious and rich ;
The May has come to fill all hearts with glee :
The sun smiles witchingly upon the lake,
That is as clear as tears of children be.

The birds are singing sweet a song divine,
The grapes are sending out ambrosial scent.
I see the nightingale, my colleague, seek
A pleasant home within the wood's green tent.

The forest whispers and the flowers bloom fair,
The sky again is bright, of beauteous hue.
Man's consolation, May, has come: but ah!
My sisters and my brothers, not to you!

You scarcely see the glory of the May,
Your minds are barred from all these lovely scenes.
Within the shops till late at night you sit,
Bent double, ever plying the machines.

You toil and toil; they take from you your strength,
Your life-blood, your best years, in prison passed.
You toil and toil, with no repose, no rest,
Till in your coffins you are laid at last.

But come it must—so I believe and hope—
A fresh, new time, a fresh, new kind of May.
Men will no more be animals and sheep,
And you, too, shall rejoice in freedom's day.

My sisters and my brothers, lose not heart!
A time shall come that much to you shall bring,
When nothing you shall hear but songs of joy,
Of grass and flowers, of liberty and spring!

THE STREAMLET.

In the cold North, between the stony rocks,
A lonely streamlet sorrowfully flowed.
Foaming the spray dashed, and the rocks looked down,
As if they whispered, "Whither leads thy road?"

"Why hast thou come here to the wilderness,
A tardy guest? In this lone desert gray
Thy waters in the darkness will dry up;
Thou canst not through the passes break thy way."

Clear, pearly spray fell on the rocks like tears.
Gleaming like steel, the streamlet wound along
Softly, as if it answered to the rocks:
"Oh, ye are wrong! Rocks, ye are wholly wrong!"

"Ye laugh at me in pride: 'We rocks are strong;
Thou, streamlet, weak. We ne'er shall be o'erthrown
Rocks, laugh not! Granite does not last for aye;
Continual dropping hollows out the stone.'"

FORTH FROM THE GHETTO.

Break forth from bounds of Ghetto walls,
And burst the bands of the yoke that galls!
Your care-bent backs make straight again.
Your valor raise in height like men,—

To height of hearts now worn with woe—
The woe that saps on drip and flow
Of warm life blood! Let each one cry:
"The People's Cause to serve we'll try!"

No longer err in idle dreams ;
Nor longer be the scoffers' themes !
Nor longer in the nations trust—
Their kindness cold, their laws unjust !

To-day's real world take to your hearts ;
As valiant men now play your parts.
No more your backs to smiters bend—
They spit on you? Your clench'd fists send

At once in force and manly pride,
For sole return. No moment bide,
But instantly, with all your might,
The vaunting mouth of the braggart smite.

To lying lips strike back the shame
Of baseless lies meant to defame !
Forth from the Ghetto to open air—
How long will ye sink and grovel there?

PLAYING THE GAME.

A number of urchins were romping one day,
One afternoon out in the street.
Their spirits were high and joyous their play,
And tireless their tongues and their feet.
Yet they wearied at length, for each game that they knew
Lacked freshness and so made them tire.
They long'd for some sport that was pleasant and new,
And loudly discussed their desire.

A big boy at length on the head hit the nail—
 "Let's play there's a fair on these rocks!
I'll play I'm a farmer with oxen for sale,
 And you, Jim, shall play you're the ox.
I'll lead you up here by a ring through the nose—
 You'll strain and you'll pull to get free;
I'll haul and I'll swear, and I'll lay on the blows—
 We'll find it no end of a spree!"

Bill soon got a rope, made a noose at one end,
 And Jim, by his teeth, gripp'd the noose.
Bill tugg'd and he swore, and laid on with a stick—
 Jim's shoulders showed many a bruise.
For mercy he cried, but held fast all the same,
 Though he felt his poor jaws nearly broke.
Bill said: "Never mind, for you're gaining great fame,
 And you know it is only a joke!"

A bystander cried out: "Let go of the noose,
 You're not bound to submit to such knocks!"
Jim answered: "You know that I dare not refuse,
 Or some other will soon play the ox.
I might let go the rope and get quit of the blows;
 If I don't, do not hold me to blame;
An ox must expect to be led by the nose—
 As for bruises, they're part of the game!"

MORAL.

The moral of this, when to politics applied,
 All observers the aptness proclaim:
The General Public, it can't be denied,
 Is like the small boy in that game.
(There are men who are proud of the hardest of knocks;
 They really rejoice in the blows.)
Oh, the General Public is much like an ox,
 And it loves to be led by the nose!

THE PIG: A FABLE.

In the animal kingdom, the same as with men,
There are social events. It befell once of yore
There was held a great festival, gallant and gay,
Where the leader and host was a corpulent boar.
He invited a number of pigs to the feast,
And he placed them in order of rank, one and all.
Then suddenly, lo! a fat sow, full of pride,
Came forward, beginning in anger to bawl:
"Oh, he has insulted us! Trampled, indeed,
On our very honor!" (For e'en among swine,
You see, there is honor). "Say, who let him in?
Oh, how he has angered us! Well, this is fine!"
"Why, whom do you mean?" asked the boar; and a stream
Of words poured in wrath from the mouth of the sow:
"An ox has intruded among us, just look!"
She glared at him swinishly: "There he goes, now!
"He mocks us! Down with him! A stranger is he;
His object in coming must be to destroy
Our fair peace and quiet, to drain the damp swamps
In which all we pigs find such genuine joy;
"And here, where there, now is so fragrant a stench,
He would set up an orchard, fields—pastures, in fine,
Where cattle will graze, and their herdsman, the fool,
With his singing will silence the grunts of the swine!"
"Be pacified, madam!" responded the boar.
"I feel that my dignity cannot afford
To expel even such an intruder unheard;
I shall summon at once an advisory board."
The advisory board soon appeared on the scene,
And then, strictly guarded, the ox was led in;—
(Such methods the boar learned from Plehve, no doubt;)—
And, waving his tail, the boar cried, to begin:
"Ox, what have you come here for? Bring me a stick!"
The accused answered loudly, and paying no heed

To the scared court of swine, "You would better go down
To the river, you pigs, for your snouts greatly need—"
"How now!" in a rage interrupted the boar.
"Why, tyrant, be angry? It was not for strife
Or quarrel I came here; what led me to come
Was your wretched condition, your horrible life.
"I want to clean up the black mud, the rank filth,
Which for so many years have surrounded your tribe;
My wish is to lead you all out into light,
And I for my help ask no payment, no bribe."
"We care naught for your gardens, your orchards, your fields!"
Said a pig who was on the advisory board.
"More sweet in our ears is the croaking of frogs
Than songs from the throats of the nightingales poured."
"Let us kill him," they cried, "the fresh fellow! and then
In peace we will finish our meal in the mud."
"But what would you kill me for?" bellowed the ox,
"And why do you wish to shed innocent blood?"
"You are dangerous company for us!" they cried;
And with rage and suspicion their small eyes grew big;
"You are dangerous to us," they grunted and squealed,
"Because you don't want to be like us—a pig!"

THE LION AND THE DOGS—A FABLE.

Once on a time the dogs felt much aggrieved
Because the lion was so strong and proud.
In consequence, they valiantly resolved
To cast dirt on him till he should be cowed.
"We must all stand together, and condemn
The haughty fellow strongly, and cry 'Shame!'
Till he grows small,"—('twas thus one dog called out)—
"We need but be united in our aim,

“And bark at him with malice, one and all,
And oft to him our sharpened teeth display.”
Thus spoke he, and immediately strove
To show what he could do, in doggish way.
He lifted up his tail with insolence,
And at the lion with zeal began to pour
A flood of filth; and to his aid there came
Dogs without number, ever more and more.
All impudently barked, and more than all
One Lilliputian dog of sable hue.
He of his courage vehemently bragged,
Painting the lion as black all through and through.
Unto the lion soon there came reports
About those dogs, whose barking echoed wide.
“Oh, I could silence all the canine race!”
(’Twas thus the lion quietly replied).
“But since of all the forest I am lord,
It would not be a fitting thing for me
To make a noise because of worthless curs
That objects only of my scorn can be.
“They cannot in their dirt envelop me;
Far from me is their dust—it leaves no stain.
They are but dogs—they have to bark and yelp.
And I? The self-same lion I remain!”

DEBORAH

AN EPIC POEM
in FOUR PARTS



BY
EZEKIEL LEAVITT

DEBORAH.

An Epic Poem in Four Parts.

I.

DEBORAH :

The light of Friday eve will soon be gone,
And with it will my light of life expire.
When the sun hides himself behind the hills
And finishes once more his daily course,
Edging the rim of heaven's broad expanse
With a deep tinge of ruby-purple hue,
Then, with the latest beams of this day's sun,
I shall depart, and leave the world behind.
Weep, weep, my heart, bidding farewell to earth!
To a far land, a melancholy land,
I with a sinful thought shall pass away.
But I perchance in heaven shall pardon find.
The Lord omniscient reads the hearts of men,
And will salvation grant. Creator! Lord!
I with a prayer invoke Thee; for the sake
Of two much-loving souls Thy world I leave.
Thus to pronounce the stern decree of fate
Do I resolve. Why should I linger still?
Doubt evermore unto misfortune leads.
What shall I do? And what shall I decide?
Oh, shall I bring myself a sacrifice
To my sad father, shatter my young dreams,
And live on lonely with a broken heart,
Awaiting, with a sore-afflicted soul,
Another love, and give myself to it
Without a struggle, unresisting, meek?
But no! vain hope, with such a frightful past
Calm comfort in the future to expect!
E'en so a shrub, once broken by the storm,

Waits not for a revival in the spring;
When blows the lightest zephyr, it will fall.
When in the earth its roots are all decayed,
No leaves will bud upon the withered stump.
When fate the heart has broken, there can be
No further expectation in the soul.
O suffering child, O child of misery!
No future consolation I expect.
Shall I then sacrifice myself, or shall
Stern duty yield to love, and shall I scorn
The everlasting laws, God's covenants
Immortal? With the passion of my heart
My father, my poor father, shall I slay?
And shall I say I will become *his* wife—
I, Deborah, the daughter of a Jew?
And loneliness and hunger, cold and care,
Anxieties about our daily bread,
I shall forget in happiness with him,
And I shall live and bloom again! What then?
Heaven will not condemn me. God is love;
And I love him, my friend, more ardently
Than aught on earth, and with him I will love
Forever holy truth and liberty.
Freedom of thought he will instill, and teach
Unto my heart, which is oppressed with pain
From grievous poortith in a wretched hut.
Shall it be so, then? And my father's tears!
O God in heaven! for my father's sake
A bloody sacrifice I needs must bring,
A sacrifice he will not comprehend.
Then let it be so! I will trust my heart;
It will point out the way to me, and teach
My soul how to preserve my father's love,
And how to be to him until the end
A consolation in his bitter lot.
But who is there? You, my own father dear?

FATHER:

Good day to you, my daughter Deborah!
Collect yourself, my child; you look unwell.
You have allowed a sad and mournful thought
Upon your mother to make dark your face.

DEBORAH:

Love, like the daylight, father, darkens not.

FATHER:

Child! yet the sun, beneath whose glowing beams
The roses blossom forth so splendidly,—
That sun with sultry rays breeds noxious worms
Within the wretched dwellings of the poor,
When filth with greedy touch assails their huts.

DEBORAH:

A horrible example! Though my friend
A Gentile be, my love for him is pure.

FATHER:

My child, I see you are not well today.
I will withdraw, and later, dear, we'll talk.

DEBORAH:

Oh, no! I pray, go not! Remain with me.
Today or later, 'twill be all the same.
The weakness of my heart has but one source—
Irresolution, strife of mind and heart.

FATHER:

But your firm mind had won the victory,
And triumphing you came to me with pride?

DEBORAH:

Ah, no, my mind has not yet won! But pray,
My own——

FATHER:

Be silent? Oh, not so, my child!
Like to a slave most abject, I entreat;

Like to a haughty sovereign, I command—
Forget him! Child, you know me; honestly
In the poor hovel of a laborer
The duties of a Jew I have performed.

DEBORAH:

I know it all. You, my own father dear,
I see enduring misery and grief;
In deep affliction you drag out your days,
A victim of stern fate.

FATHER:

O child, believe
My words—

DEBORAH:

Are my death sentence, well I know.

FATHER:

O dearest Deborah, you will not die.
You in the name of God will live, my child,
And in the name of sacred truth. For you
There is a way—a thorny way; but bow
Your young head to your fate, and in your heart
Be always pure! Hold fast a sacred truth—
That beauty is a gift most perilous
In our time; for the men of this our day,
Preachers of boastful pride and haughtiness,
Defame the name of man, and recklessly
All innocent illusions they destroy.
Nor love nor pity in their hearts you'll find,
When you, forgetful of your blood and race,
To a new family commit yourself.
But, if my gray head must be whelmed with shame,
Your mother will complain to God that I
A father's duty have but ill performed;
Heaven's thunder on this grieved gray head will fall—
A head that with gray hair before its time
Was covered, through anxiety—a head

Whose brain has been worn out with countless woes.
O daughter mine, I beg! Behold, I weep!
These bitter tears, my daughter, from your heart
Your strong delusion ought to wash away.
I bend before you, spite of nature's laws—
A helpless father, bowed before his child;
And you can crush me, or can cure my grief.

DEBORAH :

Father, weep not! More painful are your tears
To me than all my pain. And here I swear,
Father, by yon clear heaven, and by earth,
And by the sun, which haply shines for me
For the last time, and by the memory
Of my beloved mother who is dead,
Whose life in grief and sorrow passed away,
Without bright dreams, without calm, tranquil days—
I swear, my own dear father, that to cease
To love my friend is not within my power;
E'en to forget him is beyond my strength.
But yet his wife I will not be. I am
Your daughter—daughter, too, of Israel;
I love you, and our Moses I revere;
I love my race; a Jewess I will die.

FATHER :

The heart's wound will be healed in course of time,
And joy again find place within your soul.
Farewell! May peace be with you, Deborah!

DEBORAH :

Be hushed and still, vain hopes! Do not rejoice
The old man's heart, lest with dread suddenness
It should be smitten soon! And I? I go
For the last time to meet my dearest friend.

II.

YOUNG MAN:

Oh, what a night! How brightly gleam the stars
Far in the azure heavens! All nature through,
Quiet as in a cemetery reigns,
And the whole world is wrapped in calm repose.
The forest's witching sounds are hushed and still,
The birds are silent, sleeping free from care;
The aged oak-tree seems to slumber, too.
All things around are quiet. Dreams of bliss,
Filling the heart, are whispering sweet and low,
"Seize on the moments brief of happiness,
And wait with patience here for Deborah."
Love has no wisdom, but has mighty power;
It will o'ercome the maiden's bashfulness,
And it will bring fair Deborah to me.
And I will tell her that without avail
She said to me—it was but yesterday—
"First love alone is pure and undefiled!"
Those words pierced through me like a poisoned sting.
Useless are reasons; I have fallen in love;
Love, my beloved friend, is always love,
And of my other passions of past days
The memories are dim within my heart.
Now with the thought of you alone I live,
And you alone, O Deborah, I love!
I love with ardor, madly, like a youth;
Like a dear gift, I for our meeting look.
When by your side, dear friend, I can forget
Life's bitterness; near you I live again,
And all my heart once more is filled with cheer.
When I am by your side, I can believe
That happiness is possible on earth,
Where there is little joy, but countless griefs!
Like a young bird, my dear, at times you sing,

Blithe, free from care or trouble, and you act
Merrily and provokingly; and then
I'm ready to forget that happiness
Is but a vision and a swift mirage.
'Tis like a youthful maiden; with a smile
She glances at us once, then vanishes,
And afterward no trace of her is left.
But, Deborah, when you are mute, and when
A wave of restless yearning dims your face,
And when the hesitation of your heart
Subdues your movements' graceful nimbleness,
And, like the dew on crimson roses shed,
What time the morning sun's majestic beam
Enfolds them in the glorious light of day,
The crystal teardrops glisten in your eyes,
And, moving slowly downward more and more,
Begin to march across your beauteous cheeks—
Then in my eyes you truly are divine,
Like a celestial dweller in the heavens.
And where? Where? In a miserable hut,
Beside a sad old man, who told me once:
"The prudent mind within a woman's heart,
This is the guide of piety; to be
Before her marriage an obedient child,
After, a virtuous and honest wife,
When over the young girl's weak heart his power
Her father to her husband shall resign."
But hush! I hear the rustling of a robe.
Oh, is it she, or does my heart mistake?

DEBORAH:

Here, here am I, my well-beloved friend!

YOUNG MAN:

O Deborah, I am not a mere friend!

DEBORAH :

Vain is discussion ; only a brief time
Is left to argue. For a moment's space
I have come here, to give you my farewell.
Forget me, if forgetfulness your heart
Appals not. I—I will not be your wife!

YOUNG MAN :

Can it be possible you love me not?

DEBORAH :

I love you! Of my life my love is part;
Together with my heart that love has grown,
And I shall bear it with me to the grave,
A precious and inestimable gift.
What to the soul is death? Why should we fear?
I shall die calmly and serenely now.
Who has felt love is not afraid of death—
Not death itself. My friend, believe my words.
Oh, what is death to us? A moment's space,
And he who has been happy, who has loved,
Who has survived fond love's emotion deep—
Though he has lived a brief span, has lived long.

YOUNG MAN :

Your fear is then because you doubt my love?

DEBORAH :

Oh, no, not so! I cannot disbelieve
Your words, as I to love you cannot cease.
So the bright sun in heaven can give no warmth
When he doth cease to shine.

YOUNG MAN :

You love me not,
And your intention is to ruin me
To please your father and your native land.

DEBORAH :

Nay, native land and mother country dear,
Those sounds so sweet and precious to the heart,
Those words are not for me; you know it well.
A stranger here in a strange land am I.
My nation, hard and thorny is thy road;
Around thee is the darkness of the night.
Thy heart was pained, thy breast was rent with grief,
Yet forward didst thou go. Within thee dwelt
Thy holy faith, the great Creator's gift,
And like a lighthouse it hath ever shone
And lighted up thy dark and gloomy way.
O my own nation, thou art dear to me!
I love thee for thy sufferings long and great,
And for the hatred of thine enemies,
And for thy thirst for knowledge and for truth.
I love thy heroes, valiant men of old.
Not for my life, nor my friend's happiness,
My love for my own nation will I yield.
Still faithful to my people's memory,
Let me bear suffering and loneliness!

YOUNG MAN :

Alas, alas! I see you love me not.

DEBORAH :

So long as yonder stars above us shine,
Until the moon and sun shall fall from heaven
Into destruction's deep abyss, my friend,
Still shall I love you. I will never wed.

YOUNG MAN :

But, say, what is your motive in all this?
You are a Jewess; is not that the cause?

DEBORAH :

That I'm a Jewess, is but little harm;
You are a Gentile; there the trouble lies.
Though I perchance could live in harmony

With you, you could not comprehend me, dear,
Or, haply, would not care. Then live, my friend;
Forget the bitterness that life has brought
Unto your lips; you still are young enough
To sweeten the deep sorrows of the heart.
I think that happiness you will not find,
But consolation will be yours, among
Friends of tempestuous youth, where life flows on
Rushing and boiling, like a foaming spring,
And brings forgetfulness of grief and care.
You by its impulse will be borne away,
O my unhappy and indocile friend!
And then you will forgive me that for love
And joy I pay you back with bitterness.
Live, live, and, like a rock beneath the storm,
Stay quiet; for the storm will pass away,
And dawn again with its bright streak illumine
Your path of life, your hard and thorny path,
And by degrees your grief will fade away.
My hour has come, my life will quickly end,
And you will soon recover and forget.
And over my forgotten grave, belike,
You with some other maid will shed a tear,
And you will say that day, "Oh, how she loved
And how she struggled! The firm mind o'ercame
And vanquished passion's impulse."

YOUNG MAN:

You will live;
Or else with you—

DEBORAH:

You, too, will die? O friend,
Wherefore? Are not my sufferings great enough,
That I must bear away with me besides
The sting of conscience?

YOUNG MAN :

But you, Deborah,
You are unhappy !

DEBORAH :

In my love I am.
But with my father's curse I will not buy
My earthly happiness.

YOUNG MAN :

Your father? Ah,
Again he blocks my way ! You soon shall see,
Dear, how I will remove him from my path !

DEBORAH :

I pray you, let my father rest in peace.
One constant sorrow all his life has been ;
No happy moment, no bright days, no joys
His heart has known ; his struggle desperate
Has had for consolation me alone ;
And how can I forget it, and with grief
Poison his life, and all his days to come ?
Forgive me, and forget me. Fare you well !

III.

And, weeping bitterly, young Deborah
Glided away. She whispered to herself :
"O mortal child, why woo you happiness ?
Why did you fall in love with yonder youth ?
Love, love, what art thou ? Oh, thou art a spark,
A ray of light amid the gloom of night,
And thou art an awakening in the heart
Weary with sorrow ; thou art light and life,
But thou art also torment as of hell !
Sometimes thou servest in a guiltless soul
As the beginning of an artful lie ;
And I—my love is guilty. When the talk

Of the gay crowd grows less, my hapless sire,
After day's labors you will fall asleep,
As innocent as any babe; and then,
My own, I too shall sleep; but you will wake,
And in the morning your poor hut will be
Filled with discussions, and a mournful noise
Will sound within its miserable walls.
No wedding feast, no joyous festive meal
Am I preparing for you, O my own!
You, who have laid your wife within the mold,
Will also bear your daughter to her grave.
And, even as in life I stood alone
Among the crowds, so in the graveyard still
Shall I be far from those who rest in peace
In Mother Earth's calm breast. Woe, Deborah!
Naught but a lonely sepulchre will then
Remain as a memorial of you!
Hiding his eyes for shame my sire will walk,
That none may look with mocking raillery
On the sick, broken father, when he goes
On his loved daughter's grave to shed salt tears.
Heaven will not dare condemn me, for I die
Because I have not courage to live on.
My friend is always with me, and his words
Are like my doom's decision. Him I love,
In him have faith, and trust him to my grave.
Oh, my heart aches, my death is drawing nigh!
The poison burns me. Quick, malignant draught,
That I made haste to drink! Oh, quickly smite,
Wreck and destroy! Be speedy, oh, be swift,
Lest vain regret awaken in my heart!
Or thou that hast beyond recall or hope
Poisoned my young life in a moment's space,
Canst thou not also slay my fearless mind
In my weak brain? Forgive me, O my sire!
Right dearly by your daughter were you loved,
And deep in my afflicted heart I feel

That you would rather mourn for me as dead
Than, robbed of honor by my fault, my sin,
To meet your own and only child with shame.
My end is come. Adieu, my father dear!
Farewell, farewell, my best-beloved friend!"

IV.

Within a lonely, wretched hut, the board
Was ready spread, and at the table's end
Two white loaves 'neath a figured coverlet
Whiter than snow—the Sabbath's needful things.
A beaker filled with wine stood also there.
Yellow with age, three plates, one cracked, two whole,
A knife without a handle, and two forks,
Two copper spoons—no more the table bore.
Yet on the board a salt-cellar was set,
And near it, in their rusty candlesticks,
Two tallow candles, glimmering with dim light,
Soon to go out, lit up the table poor,
And the sad visage of an aged man.
So light the mountain peaks the sunset rays
At eve, with parting fire from heaven's height.
The old man sat, his gray head hanging down,
And often, very often, there was heard
A deep sigh, breathed from out his broken heart.
Those sighs disturbed the stillness reigning there
As thunder the dumb silence of the fields
When thunder sounds before the break of day.
The old man's lips, with trembling, breathed a name.
Whom does he call on, the forsaken one,
Within his hovel poor and mean? Who knows?
As a fire-crested wave boils up in us,—
The feelings of hot youth—and heedlessly
We drop, as drops a twig its unripe fruit,
Our youthful dreams, and our most loved ideals—
Not so art thou, heart of the aged man!

Grown wise with years, thou knowest how to hide
 Within thine innermost recesses, all
 Thy thoughts and wishes; to unriddle them
 It would be vain for anyone to seek.
 Into deep meditation the old man
 Sank, and in anguish gazed upon the fire:
 "O sacred Sabbath fire, a short while since,
 You lit up all the gloom of my sad soul
 When, Friday eve, before the evening prayer,
 My Deborah enkindled your bright flame.
 Sweetly that flame foretold the near approach
 Of the desired hour, when the wearied breast,
 Forgetful of its grief, would freely breathe.
 O sacred fire! Now with your light, alas!
 You to my mind recall those lights that stood
 Beside my well-beloved daughter's corpse.
 My child, my child, why did earth swallow you
 Ere you had fully blossomed into flower?
 Why did you stay with me so brief a space?
 But great and wise is God, and just His law.
 Not in this world of foul impurity,
 Where Falsehood and Corruption have upreared
 Luxurious temples for themselves—not here,
 Not in this world, where keen and piercing thorns
 Keep from the hands of men the short-lived rose—
 But in the glorious and eternal heaven,
 There, my own daughter, thou shalt live! Amid
 The chorus of the shining evening stars,
 With the assembly of the Cherubim,
 There shalt thou sing with joy, my child, my child!
 Not here, where men their brethren smite and slay,
 And tread the holiest things beneath their feet,
 Should those sweet songs of paradise be heard."
 The old man's eyes grew bright and full of light:
 "The Sabbath is a holy day, God's day;
 I will not dampen it with tears of mine!"
 The old man shouts aloud the Sabbath hymn:

“Oh, come, let us exult before the Lord!”
And his pure tones flow like a stream in spring,
Clear, full of glory, from beneath the snow.
The old man’s hymns monotonously flow
Within his lonely, miserable hut,
Where his deep sighs and sobs had given life
Only to griefs; where all things dying seem.
But soon the old man’s hymns were heard no more.
Weeping and groaning drowned them; so the roar
Raised by a wounded tiger in the wood
May sometimes drown the faint and gentle moan
Made by a deer, just as it breathes its last.

O’er the young girl’s cold corpse her lover wept,
And he brought to her there, for the last time,
His last sad gift—his salt and bitter tears.

* * * * *



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NOTE—The poems “Playing the Game” and “Forth From the Ghetto” are translated by Jacob Goldstein; the poem, “Songs of Zion” by Miss Rebecca A. Altman; the remainder are all translated by Miss Alice Stone Blackwell.

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